

CALIFORNIA OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES



OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS



WHAT DOES AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST DO?

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS help mentally, emotionally, and physically disabled patients become self-sufficient. To that end, Therapists design programs that include educational, vocational, and rehabilitative activities. The goal of occupational therapy is to enable patients to gain confidence, to adapt to their particular handicap, and to use their time in ways that are rewarding to them.

Occupational Therapists, working with the doctor and patient, decide on a therapy plan. Therapists must consider the type of developmental delay, injury, or mental deficiency so that rehabilitation goals are realistic and the patient's psychological needs are met. Frequently, Therapists work as members of a team with other health professionals.

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INTEREST AREA
SOCIAL



Occupational Therapists teach many types of activities to enhance or restore function. Occupational Therapists perform the following tasks:

- Help patients relearn daily living routines such as dressing, eating, using the telephone, handling money, and homemaking tasks.
- Design special equipment (feeding devices, clothing adaptations, or splints) to enable patients to perform these tasks.
- Direct activities to help patients with balance and coordination problems, with injuries to their nervous systems, or to help children whose nervous systems are not developing normally.
- Supervise coordination exercises such as bike riding or jumping, cutting or folding paper and other activities to sharpen the senses of touch, smell, sight, and sound.
- Teach manual skills such as typing or use of power tools to restore physical mobility and help prepare patients for future employment.

Occupational Therapists may supervise other Occupational Therapists, certified occupational assistants, occupational therapy aides or activity leaders. Some Therapists teach occupational therapy in colleges and universities.

WHAT SKILLS ARE IMPORTANT?

Important skills, knowledge, and abilities for Occupational Therapists include:

- Instructing – Teaching others how to do something.
- Speaking – Talking to others to convey information effectively.
- Social Perceptiveness – Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do.

- Complex Problem Solving – Identifying complex problems and reviewing related information to develop and evaluate options and implement solutions.
- Therapy and Counseling – Knowledge of principles, methods, and procedures for diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation of physical and mental dysfunctions, and for career counseling and guidance.
- Education and Training – Knowledge of principles and methods for curriculum and training design, teaching and instruction for individuals and groups, and the measurement of training effects.
- Psychology – Knowledge of human behavior and performance; individual differences in ability, personality, and interests; learning and motivation; psychological research methods; and the assessment and treatment of behavioral and affective disorders.
- Learning Strategies – Selecting and using training/instructional methods and procedures appropriate for the situation when learning or teaching new things.
- Oral Comprehension – The ability to listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.
- Deductive Reasoning – The ability to apply general rules to specific problems to produce answers that make sense.
- Written Expression – The ability to communicate information and ideas in writing so others will understand.

WHAT'S THE WORK ENVIRONMENT?

Occupational Therapists work in hospitals, rehabilitation centers, school systems, psychiatric facilities, convalescent homes, and private practice settings. They may work in a clinic room with specific therapeutic tools or at the patient's bedside. Therapists in private practice may go to clients' homes. The physical working conditions are usually good with well-lighted, heated, and clean rooms.

Union Membership

Therapists may belong to the Occupational Therapy Association of California, the State affiliate of the American Occupational Therapy Association.

WHAT'S THE CALIFORNIA JOB OUTLOOK?

The following information is from the occupational projections produced by the Employment Development Department (EDD) Labor Market Information Division (LMID):

Estimated number of workers in 2000:	6,400
Estimated number of workers in 2010:	8,800
Projected Growth 2000-2010:	37.5%
Est. openings due to separations by 2010:	1,900

These figures do not include self-employment.

Employment is projected to grow at a rate much faster than the average compared with all occupations in California. Most jobs are in hospitals, convalescent institutions, and offices of health practitioners.

Trends

The overall outlook for Occupational Therapists in California is good. The increase in the middle-aged and elderly populations will mean greater demand for Therapists. This population is at a greater risk for disease or injury-related disabilities that can often be helped by therapeutic intervention. Innovative health care and surgeries that are more sophisticated will result in patients surviving what was formerly fatal trauma. These patients are in greater need of rehabilitation after they are released from the hospital.

WHAT DOES THE JOB PAY?

California Earnings

Occupational Therapists 2002 Wages

Hourly wages range from	\$24.07	to	\$33.88
Average hourly wage			\$28.90
Average annual wage			\$60,111

Source: Occupational Employment Survey of Employers by EDD/LMID.

The starting monthly salary for Therapists working for the State of California is \$2,884 and increases to \$3,771 through merit increases. Federal salaries for Occupational Therapists start at \$2,772 per month and go up to \$4,727 per month.

Hours

Most employers schedule Therapists for a 40-hour workweek.

Benefits

Employers generally offer a comprehensive benefit package including retirement plans, insurance plans, vacation, and sick leave.

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE JOB?

Education and Training

Occupational Therapists attend a school accredited by the American Occupational Therapy Association or the World Federation of Occupational Therapy to get certification. Accredited California schools offering a Bachelor's degree in occupational therapy are:

- Loma Linda University, Loma Linda
- San Jose State University, San Jose
- University of Southern California, Los Angeles
- Samuel Merritt College, Oakland
- Dominican University of California, San Rafael
- California State University Dominguez Hills, Carson City

These programs include at least 960 hours of fieldwork in a hospital or community center.

High school students interested in occupational therapy should obtain information from schools offering an occupational therapy program. They should also meet the admission requirements for the institution offering training in the field. Courses in biology, physics, chemistry, social science, psychology, industrial arts, and homemaking are good preparation for future college training programs.

Licensing and Certification

Effective January 1, 2003, Occupational Therapists are required to hold a license granted by the California Board of Occupational Therapy. To qualify for licensure, an applicant must meet the following requirements:

- Be at least 18 years of age.
- Successful completion of an Occupational Therapy educational program at an institution accredited by the American Occupational Therapy Association.
- Complete a minimum of 960 hours of supervised fieldwork.
- Pass a certification exam as administered by the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT).

Therapists licensed in other states or who currently meet certain criteria established by the California statute and the Occupational Therapy Board may apply for a California license or certificate.

Continuing Education

Continuing Education to maintain certification or licensing are not required at this time. Licensing became mandatory in 2003 and continuing education units were not required at that time.

HOW DO I FIND THE JOB?

Direct application to employers remains one of the most effective job search methods. Private firms are listed in the yellow pages under Occupational Therapists, Rehabilitation Services, Hospitals and Clinics. California job openings can be found at various online job-listing systems including CalJOBSSM at www.caljobs.ca.gov or at America's Job Bank at www.ajb.dni.us.

For other occupational and wage information and a listing of the largest employers in any county, visit the Employment Development Department Labor Market Information Web page at www.calmis.ca.gov. Find further job search assistance from your nearest Job Service office www.edd.ca.gov/jsloc.htm or the closest One-Stop site listed on the California WorkNet site, www.sjtcc.ca.gov/sjtccweb/one-stop.

The Occupational Therapy Association of California and universities with Occupational Therapist programs are the main channels for bringing jobs and job seekers together. Employers may also list openings with the Employment Development Department Job Service, in the association newsletter and other professional journals. Job seekers may apply directly to federal, State, and county employment offices.

WHERE CAN THIS JOB LEAD?

In large health facilities with large therapy staffs, Therapists may be promoted to supervisory positions. In facilities having only one or two-person staffs, promotional opportunities are more limited. Opportunities for advancement to administrative and supervisory positions are better for those Therapists with a Master's degree in occupational therapy. Many experienced Therapists choose to go into private practice or consulting.

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Occupational Therapy Association of California
1401 El Camino Avenue, Suite 230
Sacramento, CA 95815
(916) 567-7000
www.healthcareresource.com/otac

California Board of Occupational Therapy
444 North 3rd Street, Suite 410
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 322-3394
www.bot.ca.gov

American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 31220
Bethesda, MD 20824-1220
(301) 652-2682
www.aota.org

National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy, Inc.
800 S. Frederick Avenue, Suite 200
Gaithersburg, MD 20877-4150
(301) 990-7979
www.nbcot.org

Employment Projections by Occupation
www.calmis.ca.gov/htmlfile/subject/occproj.htm

Employment and Wages by Occupation
[www.calmis.ca.gov/file/occup\\$/OES\\$.htm](http://www.calmis.ca.gov/file/occup$/OES$.htm)

RELATED OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES

Physical Therapists	No. 117
Physical Therapy Aides and Assistants	No. 451

OCCUPATIONAL CODE REFERENCES

SOC (<i>Standard Occupational Classification</i>)	
Occupational Therapists	29-1122

O*NET (<i>Occupational Information Network</i>)	
Occupational Therapists	29-1122.00

OES (<i>Occupational Employment Statistics</i>)	
Occupational Therapists	32305

DOT (<i>Dictionary of Occupational Titles</i>)	
Occupational Therapist	076.121-010
Industrial Therapist	076.167-010